



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to the August edition of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Roadkill Research and Mitigation Project's newsletter. I am now based down in Grahamstown where I am busy analysing my data at Rhodes University. It's a beautiful part of the country but a very different temperature to northern Limpopo. The project continues to move forwards especially with its merge with another Endangered Wildlife Trust programme. It will combine with the Airport Wildlife Programme to form a larger group, the **Wildlife and Transport Programme** which will look at all forms of impacts of transport on wildlife.

There have been some really interesting news reports from around the world concerning wildlife and roads – this month we feature a heart-rending story from Etosha. There is also a great story from Australia about wildlife and shipping – we often don't consider that wildlife is at threat from other forms of transport. And this is where, the EWT's Wildlife and Transport Group (WTP) is set to make its mark. The WTP already examines the impacts of roads and airports on wildlife the next stage will be to incorporate trains and shipping.

Kind regards,

Wendy

**MSc candidate: Rhodes University / Tshwane University of Technology
Roadkill Research and Mitigation Project / Biodiversity Research
Endangered Wildlife Trust**



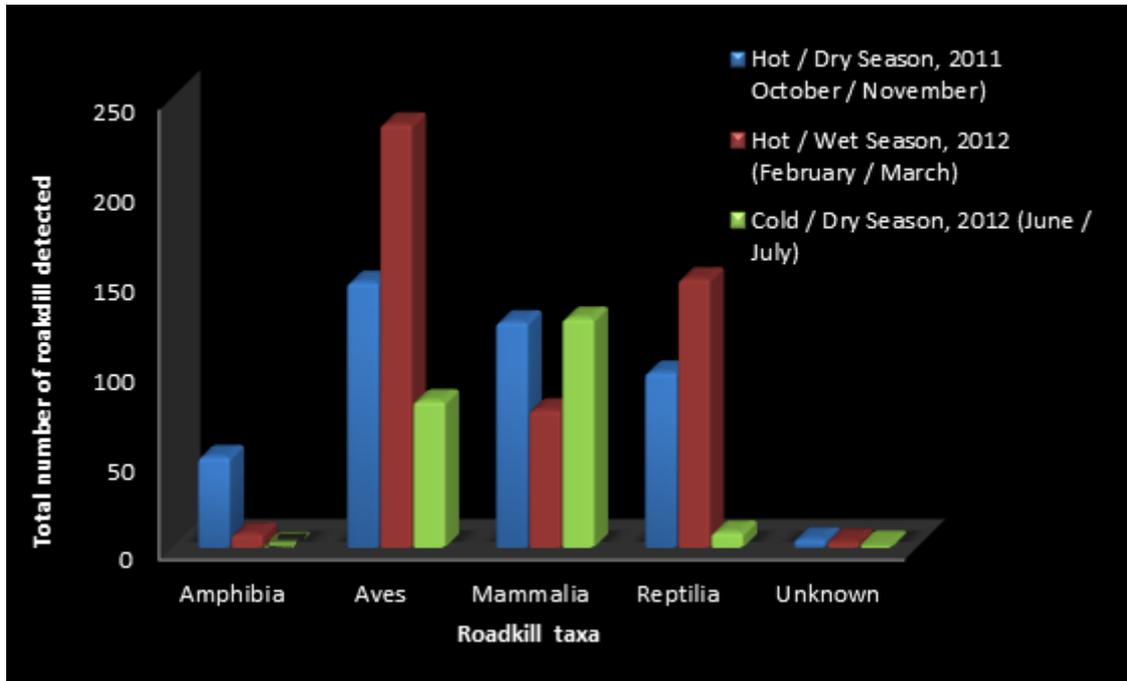
ACTIVITIES

Roadkill Research in South Africa

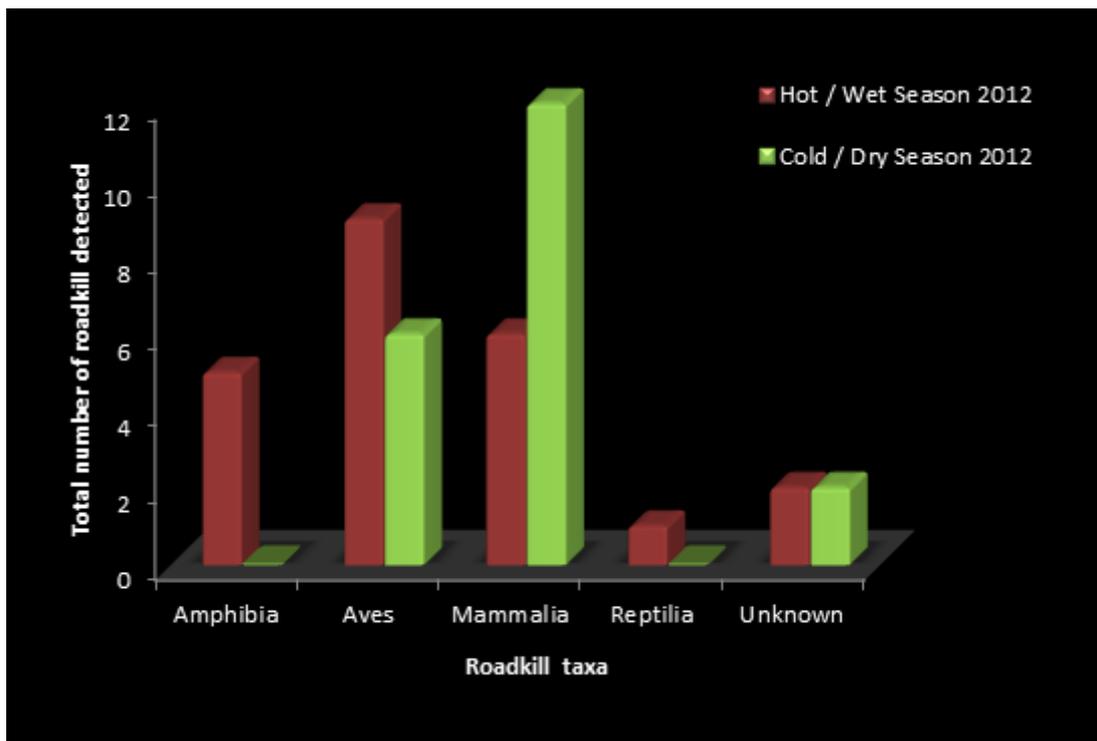
And so the data crunching has started, and we are beginning to look at the possible causes of roadkill. What's really exciting is I'm working alongside Meg Murison, an Honours student, who is also based at Rhodes University. Many of you will remember that Meg featured in the February edition of our newsletter and spoke about the work that she is conducting on roadkill in the Eastern Cape. Meg applied the method that we devised across two ecological seasons, in a totally different part of South Africa, Not only is the vegetation very different but so are many of the species that occur here. Whilst Meg found a number of different species, what is interesting about her preliminary data are her findings in each taxon.

From our two graphs you can see parallels between what we found – Meg and I both found more bird species during the hot / wet season than we did in the cold / dry season. While during the cold / dry season, mammal species dominated our findings.

We are both in our early stages of analysing our data, but there look to be some exciting comparison between two extreme ends of the country.

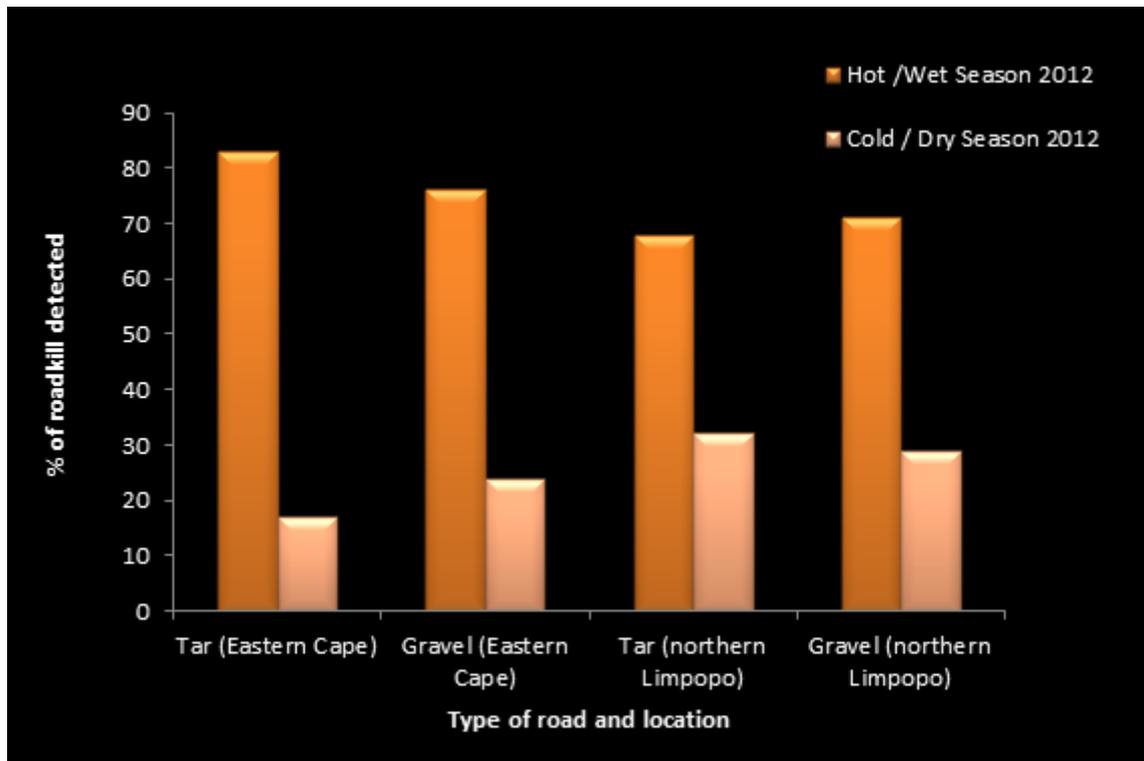


Number of roadkill detected over 120-days across three ecological seasons (Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Park Area, northern Limpopo)

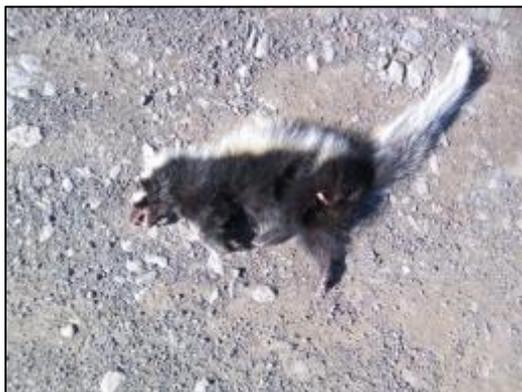


Number of roadkill detected over a 20-day period across two ecological seasons (Grahamstown vicinity, Eastern Cape)

Meg also conducted her transects on two different road surfaces, tar and gravel roads. Both our preliminary data show that the percentage of roadkill detected on the tar road was higher than it was for the gravel. Meg's gravel road was also very different to the description of the gravel road in Limpopo. Meg's picture of a Genet shows the road surface to be more stony, whilst the gravel surface in Limpopo was more sandy.



Percentage of roadkill detected across two ecological seasons, comparing two areas of South Africa and two road surfaces



Striped Polecat



Small-spotted Genet



Ground Squirrel

(Photos: Meg Murison)

NEWS AND VIEWS

ROAD ECOLOGY IN AFRICA – ENSURING OUR ROADS ARE WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

The mortality of wildlife due to collision with vehicles in Africa is the fifth greatest threat to carnivores. However, little attention has been given to this threat, and this is of significant concern in South Africa as we are the third most biologically diverse country on Earth. As a result the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Wildlife and Transport Programme (EWT-WTP) hosted two extremely successful and innovative road ecology workshops

Linear infrastructure, such as roads, railways and utility easements, dissects all continents and influences biodiversity and ecosystem processes for many hundreds and even thousands of kilometers. Combined with vehicles, their effects on wildlife are often negative and profound. In the past two decades, research on the effects of roads and traffic and the use and effectiveness of mitigation works, for example fencing and wildlife crossing structures, has increased

dramatically in Europe, North America and Australia. However, the uptake of road ecology in Africa has been slower and it is not a routine part of road construction or management.

“The first workshop was hosted by the EWT at the International Wildlife Management Congress in Durban, and the second at their headquarters in Modderfontein, Johannesburg. The purpose of the two workshops was to explore the impacts of roads and traffic on wildlife and showcase innovative and practical solutions,” commented Claire Patterson-Abrolat, Manager of the EWT-WTP. “We were extremely lucky to have two world-renowned road ecologists providing expertise at both of our workshops: Dr Rodney van der Ree from the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology from the University of Melbourne, and Dr Daniel J. Smith, from the University of Central Florida. Both workshops were extremely well attended with wildlife representatives from across the world as well as delegates from our national roads agencies.”



These workshops took participants through the concept of Road Ecology and some excellent case study presentations were made which outlined some of the findings of various research projects, and the mitigation measures available for use. Wendy Collinson of the EWT’s Roadkill Research and Mitigation Project shared her findings of roadkill surveys conducted over the last year in the Greater Mapungubwe Area in the northern Limpopo. Driving 100km daily across 120 days, she detected more than 1100 roadkill comprising 166 different species. As a result of the two workshops, the EWT-WTP will be collaborating with road agencies as well as other interested parties to develop an Action Plan that guides efforts to address the concerns.

For further information about the Wildlife and Transport Programme please contact Claire Patterson-Abrolat on clairep@ewt.org.za. The Roadkill Research and Mitigation Project is a project initiated by the EWT, Rhodes University and Tshwane University of Technology with funding from Bridgestone SA, E O & Son, De Beers Consolidated Mines, Rhodes University and Mopane Bush Lodge.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

DAVID VS GOLIATH: LION CUBS GET CAUGHT IN ETOSHA TRAFFIC!

“Working as a guide in the bush, one gets the opportunity to experience unbelievable wildlife sights. But in three years guiding I have never seen anything like what we saw that fated afternoon in Etosha National Park.”

“I spotted a lioness walking through a huge grassy plain towards the road. We stopped short of her so as not to block her path and switched off the engine. When we got the binoculars on her, we noticed that she was in full lactation and she seemed very anxious.



This is when I heard it first, a squeaky call that could only mean one thing... cubs! The lioness confirmed our suspicions by turning around and letting out a low, throaty *oomph* contact call. She started crossing the road and the tiniest little ball of fur stumbled out onto the road behind her. It then saw us and proceeded to stumble towards us, this may well have been the first time they had ever seen vehicles and weren't sure how to react to them."

"This was on the busiest road in Etosha and had caused a medium sized conglomeration of intimidating spectators. She decided that this was all too much and her cubs were too overwhelmed to follow her to safety on their own feet. So she picked one up ever so gently with jaws that crack buffalo bones and carried it off into the plain."



"Meanwhile her other wayward cub decided it was a good idea to investigate a massive delivery truck, which gave us a great perspective as to how tiny they actually were. This did not comfort mom however, who frantically ran over to it, swatted flat, picked it up and deposited it in the relative protection of the plain's long grass. One cub still remained between her and the gauntlet of vehicles which bothered her a lot."

"The madness escalated when a black backed jackal arrived on the scene and showed interest in one of the cubs. The lioness was now torn between fetching her remaining cub near the vehicles, defending the other from the jackal and consoling the other one milling blind in the grass."



"The mood in our vehicle varied from awe and amazement to fear and nervousness and finally guilt. It was time for us to get out of here, clearly all the spectating vehicles were impacting on this poor mother. The last thing we wanted was to have the death of one of these cubs on our hands. The problem was to convince all the other vehicles that our

presence wasn't helping the lioness' predicament and that it would be best if we all gave her some space. The private tourist vehicles saw our point and agreed to move off but it was the game viewers full of tourists that were the challenge. The guides half agreed and switched their engines on but that's as far as they went. It's tricky trying to convince a local guide, who's probably been guiding since we were in school, that we know what's best. With mixed emotions we left we the sighting, hoping that the lioness recovered her remaining cub and that she reunited with the pride."

Matthew Weaver (All photographs copyright of Matthew Weaver)

<http://blog.africageographic.com/safari-blog/bush/david-vs-goliath-lion-cubs-get-caught-in-etosha-traffic/>

SYDNEY FERRY HITS WHALES IN HARBOUR

A humpback whale and her calf were left injured after a collision with a ferry in Sydney Harbour. The Collaroy, which was operating the 8.40am service from Circular Quay to Manly, hit an unknown object, damaging its propeller blade. Aerial footage later identified a female humpback whale with a wound near its dorsal fin, and its calf with an 80-centimetre gash.

Richard Ford, of Whale Watching Sydney, said one of his boat captains saw the ferry collide with one of the whales. "Then we saw the whale spend a little bit of time on the surface and then start swimming again. We all knew the whales were around there and an alert had come out earlier on the radio, so we knew the whales were in the vicinity and everyone was keeping a watch out. The captain said it just popped up in front of the ferry; there was nothing the ferry could do to avoid it." The NSW Department of Heritage and Environment said that the whale and her calf had left Sydney Harbour and appeared fine, and that hopefully it will survive with just a nasty scar.

An adult humpback could grow to 14 metres and weigh up to 40 tonnes. The calf was estimated to be three metres in length and weighing up to three tonnes. "Because they have a thick layer of blubber, any damage from a propeller usually doesn't impact on the muscle tissue."

The incident comes after a 10-metre, 20-tonne male humpback was found dead in an ocean pool at Newport Beach, north of Sydney, last week.

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/whale-watch/sydney-ferry-hits-whales-in-harbour-20120806-23p9z.html>



PARTNERS AND THANKS



Please check out the Blog for regular updates: <http://endangeredwildlifetrust.wordpress.com>

To find out more about individual or corporate sponsorships or partnerships, please contact:

Zai Miller (Senior fundraiser: corporates) at zaim@ewt.org.za

Debbie Thiar (Fundraiser: individual initiatives and social media) at debbiet@ewt.org.za

Joy Nel (Fundraiser: events and functions) joyn@ewt.org.za

Please contact us at:

Roadkill Research and Mitigation Project, Endangered Wildlife Trust, wendyc@ewt.org.za +27 73 596 1673